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# Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

35TH YEAR

APRIL 17, 1978

USDA SCIENTIST

## SHARES VOCATION WITH FAMILY

Susan Batra spends her days trying to work the bugs into her program.

An entomologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture at Beltsville, Md., Dr. Batra is trying to find just the right insects to aid in biological weed control in the United States.

Her work is part of a biological weed control program for the northeastern United States, more important than ever now that the search is intensifying to find ways to control weeds without using chemicals.

And not just any insect will do for that purpose.

Many insects used in the program come from Europe, because many of our weeds were brought here by the early settlers. Introducing these foreign insects is a massive control effort, because many insects eat only one kind of weed. Therefore, it is necessary to find the right ones for each weed. It takes a lot of testing, usually about 15 years of foreign exploration and testing with crops. The foreign insects must be released here to study their effect on the weeds, and they must be protected from sprays so they can survive long enough to be beneficial to man.

For instance, there are more than 300 types of insects that eat thistle weeds, but only about five are worth bringing over here in terms of usefulness to the control program.

This new approach to controlling insects beneficial to man takes patience, 5816



Dr. Suzanne Batra

USDA specialist displays bee specimens

precision, observation and originality, according to Dr. Batra. Field work requires an open mind and an ability to take new approaches to every situation that occurs. Nature is full of surprises, she has learned through the years. For instance, some insects would rather starve to death than eat plants they would not normally eat.

Also a bee specialist at USDA, Dr. Batra is involved in identifying bees from more than 20,000 species, including wild bees that do not make honey but are valuable for pollination.

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USDA 1016-78



## FOOD CLIPS

Whole milk is usually homogenized and fortified with vitamin D. The milk must meet minimum milkfat requirements set by the State or municipality where it is sold. For shipments across state lines, milk must contain a minimum of 3.25 percent milkfat.

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Don't like skim milk? Try adding a teaspoonful of instant nonfat dry milk to each glass.

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## USDA SCIENTIST (CON'T)

Dr. Batra, whose husband is a native of India, feels if more Americans had the opportunity to travel to underdeveloped countries like India, they would have a better understanding and appreciation for American agriculture. Indian families, she said, spend most of their money for food, and have little left for other needs.

The Batras enjoy camping and hiking with Persa, their 10-year-old son, and Mira, a 13-year-old daughter. On a vacation trip to her husband's village in India earlier this year, they collected bees and set up a lab in a vacant house to study them. They also studied termites that grow fungi in their nests.

Each member of the family participates in the household chores so the parents can pursue their careers.

ABOUT

YOU

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ME

New face in the communications area at the Food Market Institute is Bob Dobkin, former labor reporter with the Associated Press in Washington, D.C..

The 1978 spring workshop jointly sponsored by the Washington Edpress and National Edpress Associations will be held May 18,19 at the International Inn, Washington, D.C. The program includes speakers and workshop session leaders from the Washington Post, New York Times and National Public Radio. Contact is Marshall Donley at the National Education Reporter, 202-833-5440.. Jacque Boyd, former American Home Economics Association editor of AHEA Action is now press assistant to Rep. Edward Roybal (D-Cal.)....Irene Nolan succeeds Carolyn Lee as the Accent editor of the Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal...Linda Baker is the new consumer affairs advisor with the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture. She was the consumer education specialist for the Oregon Beef Council...Jane Wyatt, formerly with the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, is now teaching at Oregon State U.....Nancy Finch, food editor of the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch, gathered information from 67 food editors about what they use on their pages and how. Included in the survey were most of the papers with the largest circulation in the U.S. Ninety-four percent of the food editors depend on news releases, and over 80 percent do not have test kitchens. Sixty-nine percent of the papers have one-person food sections, she discovered. The Times-Dispatch plans more emphasis on consumer writing to be featured on Wednesdays.

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